


In support of the Proposed Connecticut Museum Property Act (HB 5355)

I urge our State legislators to support this bill to enable Connecticut's museums, libraries, archives, and other collection-based non-profit cultural institutions to better serve the public interest and to better care for their collections.

As the oldest public art museum in the United States, the Wadsworth Atheneum (founded in 1842) houses approximately 50,000 works of art and artifacts. Among these are large numbers of objects once deposited with the museum as loans or simply found among the museum's collections without clear indications as to their source. The museum is bound by commonly accepted ethical, legal, and practical standards to afford these objects the same level of care regardless of whether the museum maintains ownership or not. Unfortunately, some of these objects are not suitable for the museum's collection or would better serve the interests of other museums. However, without a clear determination of ownership, no such actions can be undertaken despite the potential benefit to the public interest or the interest of the museums.

Caring for objects held by a museum involves an ongoing "investment" in space allocation, staff time, record maintenance, insurance, etc. By enacting this legislation and empowering the State's museums to resolve the ownership status of these orphaned objects, the State legislature will ensure that these non-profit institutions make more efficient use of their limited resources. And, the museum-going tax-paying public is better served by more efficiently run institutions producing more thorough interpretations of collections for their visitors.



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